European dental markets trend towards group practices and consolidation

COLOGNE, Germany: Latest market figures released by the Federation of the European Dental Industry (FIDE), in cooperation with the Association of European Dental Dealers (ADDE), last month at the International Dental Show in Cologne, indicate rapid changes toward a digital dentistry manifesting in overall trends to a more global approach with group practices and consolidations throughout dental markets in Europe. The organisation’s 2015 market survey also revealed that the number of European dentists has slightly increased to a total of 276,090 in 2014 compared to 270,045 the year before.

A contrary trend showed in the number of dental offices and dental laboratories. While the numbers of the former remained flat on average, the total figures of labs in Europe has decreased in almost every surveyed country. According to ADDE President Dominique Deschietere, given the growing numbers of practicing dentists this development either indicates a trend to group practices or consolidation.

While the number of dental technicians has remained steady or slightly decreased in all countries except Hungary, the number of dental hygienists increased in all countries of the survey. This development is especially prominent in the UK, with the number of dental hygienists growing distinctively compared to 2013. As Deschietere has put it, this seems to be a result of the evermore “bending of the laws” in this area.

On the supply channels side, the percentage of direct sales from manufacturers remained steady in most countries, and the share of products purchased via e-mail or internet is constantly if only slightly, increasing compared to the previous year. Further, the figures indicate that the sales volume of equipment has dropped in 2014, while sales of sundries and consumables remained stable on average.

“Dentists continue to treat patients,” Deschietere pointed out. “Consumables and sundries, not new equipment like CAD/CAM units or intra-oral X-ray units, kept the figures up during the last years.”

To this date the gathering of information on new technologies seems to be the weak point of the survey. Although Germany shows a jump in the numbers of intra-oral scanners installed, most countries are not collecting data on the subject so far, explained Deschietere.

The annual ADDE/FIDE survey, which is conducted through its national associations since 1998 and represents the interests of more than 960 dental dealer organisations, covers the most relevant topics and trends for the European Dental Industry, such as the number of customers and end users, sales values for the main product categories, the use of computer and e-commerce, sales segments, distribution channels as well as VAT charges and their impact on the market.
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Google Mobile Armageddon and what it means

Naz Haque
UK

Google has just released an update that will prioritise mobile-friendly websites. It is indeed widely known that online audiences are moving to smartphone and tablet computers. At Dental Focus, we have seen massive shifts in the online audience over the last few years to the point now where most clients see a minimum of 55 per cent of their organic audience visits from mobile devices.

Websites and marketing campaigns achieve higher conversions when they are mobile optimised. The diagram below shows a marketing campaign we are running at the moment. In this, we achieved 10,875 sessions over 30 days. The blue bar indicates the total sessions and the orange bar segments the mobile and tablet audience. In all traffic sources, mobile has the lion’s share of the market. In this project, we invested heavily in Google pay per click and 95 per cent of conversions were via mobile.

To qualify this trend further, consider that desktop sales have started to decline significantly since 2005. After 2015, the growth in purchases of mobile devices (mobiles, tablets and phablets) has continued to outgrow desktop sales. Google focuses on its users and anyone who wants to have a presence on which it must adhere. The website must not make use of any mobile-incompatible animations created with software like Adobe Flash. This appears as a black space in a mobile screen and serves no purpose. The text on your website should be readable on mobile devices without the user needing to resize or zoom. Responsive websites will automatically adjust to serve readability factors.

User experience has always been a core area from Google’s perspective, and mobile-friendly websites have links separated sufficiently to allow a user to make a selection with ease. Google provides a platform to check whether websites are mobile-friendly. Just type in your website address at the following link: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/.

There is no reason to panic if your website is not ready by 21 April, however, expect to lose more customers to businesses with mobile-friendly websites, as they will be favoured by Google. The company has such a massive job to do reading the entire Internet, it is unlikely you will start suffering from 12.01 a.m., but you can expect to see your rankings diminish over time, especially on a mobile device search.

Colgate introduces new toothpaste for cavity prevention

SINGAPORE: Colgate has introduced a new toothpaste at the Asia Pacific Dental Conference in Singapore that contains Sugar Acid Neutralizer, which the company developed to combat sugar acids that arise when common oral bacteria react with food residue in the mouth. This reaction can cause the tooth enamel to weaken and leads to an increasing risk of cavities.

The latest addition to the company’s oral care line promises to fight tooth decay in two clinically proven ways. Firstly, the patented Sugar Acid Neutralizer deactivates harmful sugar acids in the mouth. Secondly, fluoride and calcium additives, which have proven to prevent cavity formation by reducing demineralisation, are aimed at strengthening and restoring the tooth enamel.

Despite continuing education on the importance of good oral care habits to prevent cavities, caries affects 60-90 per cent of schoolchildren and the majority of adults worldwide, according to data from the National Children’s Oral Health Foundation. One of the main factors promoting tooth decay and cavities is a high intake of sugary drinks and foods, and this appears to be a major problem in Singapore. According to the country’s Health Promotion Board, the sugar consumption in Singapore is more than twice that of the World Health Organization’s recommended annual intake of approximately 9 kg a year. Overall, the average sugar consumption in the country increased by 10 per cent from 2009 to 2012.

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Google is directed to follow its guidelines to serve these users. In this instance, such users are dentists’ existing and prospective patients. Therefore, it is really important that your website deliver to their online expectations or Google will not present your website to them.

For your website to be mobile-friendly, there are specific factors to consider:

1. **Responsive Design:** Ensure your website is designed to adapt to any screen size. This means that your website will automatically adjust its layout and content to fit different devices, including tablets and smartphones.
2. **Mobile-Friendly URL:** Ensure that your website is accessible via mobile-friendly URLs. This means that your website should load quickly on mobile devices.
3. **Fast Loading Speed:** Mobile users expect websites to load quickly. Optimize your website’s loading speed to ensure a smooth user experience.
4. **Simplified Navigation:** Simplify your website’s navigation to make it easy for mobile users to find what they need.
5. **Accessible Content:** Ensure that your website’s content is accessible to users with disabilities.
6. **Compliance with Google Guidelines:** Make sure your website is compliant with Google’s mobile-friendly guidelines. This includes using responsive design, mobile-friendly URLs, and fast loading speed.

By considering these factors, you can ensure that your website is mobile-friendly and will not be penalized by Google. Google provides a platform to check whether your website is mobile-friendly. You can type in your website address at the following link: https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/.

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